1:Diaries E-5 (1946-1949) 1954 F'85 Mgwezi F'85
Mgwezi

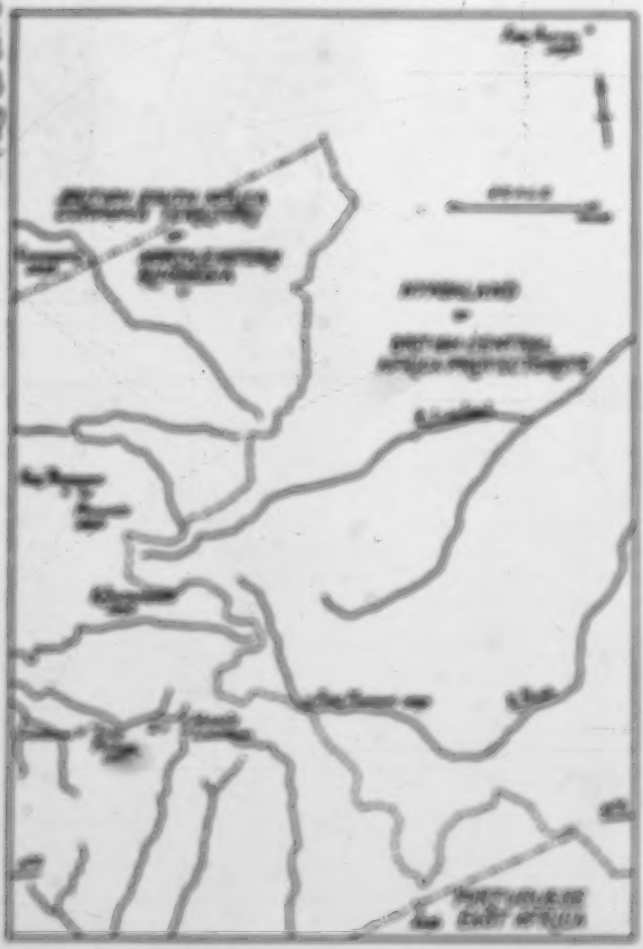
Map 8. MPEZENI'S MOORLAND AND SURROUNDING COUNTRY 1880

Area inhabited by Mgwezi's Ngoni.
Boundary of moorland surrounding inhabited area.
Modern political boundaries (1956).

[p. 67]

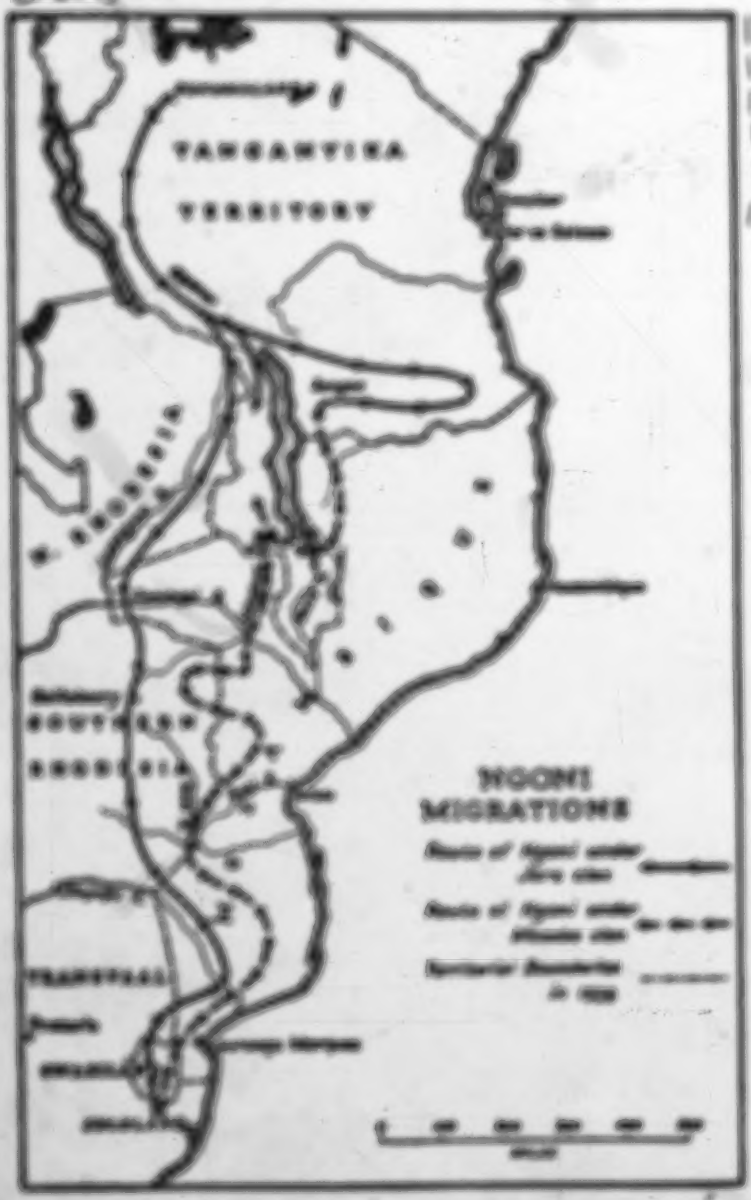
1:Series E-5 (1946-1947)/154 F35 Ngmi F35
Ngmi

Map C. WHITE SETTLEMENTS IN NGORELAND
1890-1900



[p. 99]

2: Reed E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
FRS Ngoni FRS



1 Northern Kingdom under Mbelwa
2 Jere
3 Mashambewa
4 Chiwere
5 Central Kingdom under Gomani
6 Kadindemera
7 Kasaura
8 Masula
9 Nyambwa
CENTRAL
SOUTHERN
NGONI KINGDOMS & STATES IN 1939
MILES

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

I

Ngoniland and the People who lived in it

The homeland

The little country of Nyasaland in Central Africa received its name from the lake by which Livingstone and those who followed him penetrated into the interior and reached the lands and people living round the lake. On the west side there is a narrow strip of low-lying coastal land. Then a series of escarpments begin, and up them roads and paths wind through steep wooded valleys, until the final scarp leads to the grasslands of the high plateau. Here on the high plateau the Ngoni settled about the middle of the nineteenth century, after nearly forty years of trekking from Natal to Tanganyika. They turned south again at the shores of Lake Victoria and returned to this land which they had passed through on their northward march. This high plateau has great diversity of scenery, and much of it reminded the Ngoni of the hills and valleys and grasslands of Natal. There are high mountains with sharp peaks and massive granite shoulders. Between the ranges of lower grass-covered hills are shallow valleys where the rain washes down good soil to the valley bottoms. Sweeps of grassland, bare of trees, alternate with river valleys where there is a continuous flow of water, fed by springs and mountain streams.

In the dry season, from April to November, the trees lose their leaves and the grass gradually dries up till the prevailing colours are gold and brown against the black and grey

low productivity and little power of recovery. Next, the weaker soils will be abandoned: such data as we have suggests that this stage is reached when grain yields fall below 200 lb. per acre in the normal season. The former cultivators of the abandoned land may then offer work in exchange for the food surplus still enjoyed by the holders of the stronger soils, or they may be entitled to a share of the surplus by virtue of kinship obligations. In this way a period of increasing pressure and accelerated erosion on the stronger and more fertile soils is brought about. These stages will commonly be accompanied by migration of able-bodied men to the centres of employment and the stage finally be reached when the area is dependent to a large extent on food purchased from outside sources.

In 1941 a study was made of a highly congested area in Fort Jameson District; the area of Mpezeni, Paramount Chief of the Ngoni. The chiefdom was found to be 54,000 acres in extent and, after detailed survey, the carrying capacity for traditional Ngoni agriculture was estimated to be about 1,300 to 1,400 persons. A total of 7,700 people, between five and six times the carrying capacity, were supposedly living within the chiefdom. In short, an area which, because of the high proportion of mountain country, had a critical density of only about 16 persons per square mile did in fact appear to be carrying over 90 to the square mile.

The main reasons for the continued survival of this population were found to be as follows:

(a) The time during which these conditions had existed (about 15 years) was not sufficient to show the full effects of this degree of land pressure.

(b) Great areas of hill country and dambos, which would not normally be cultivated, had been taken into cultivation. The almost incredible mountain cultivation on the Nyamlezi range was, until recently, a startling spectacle. Use of dambo grassland for *fipaka* gardens had seriously reduced grazing and was a sore point with the cattle-loving Ngoni.

(c) Under extreme pressure the population had burst its bounds and an irresistible tide had inundated adjoining private land and unoccupied European farms. In addition, a missionary organization had permitted cultivation, on payment, on land owned by the mission. By these means the effective acreage had, in fact, been increased by almost 50 per cent.

(d) A very heavy burden had been thrown on the limited soils of high fertility and resistance to erosion, the only soils left in the original area still carrying moderately good crops. These soils, then in continuous cultivation, were feeding more than twice as many people as they would normally do.

(e) The Paramount Chief was importing from Nyasaland each year a considerable quantity of food for the use of his people.

NOTES ON THE ATHOMA AND ANGONI OF THE DOWA DISTRICT OF THE PROTECTORATE.

[With Maps 1 and 2.]

By A. G. O. Hemmens.

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I.—Introductory.

1. Geographical Introduction.

The Nyasaland Protectorate consists of a strip of land some five hundred miles in length and approximately seventy miles in width, lying around the northern and western shores of Lake Nyasa, which is the most southerly and the third in size of the great East African lakes. The flat, low-lying plain which forms part of the Rift valley rises gradually from an altitude of 180 feet on the Lower Shire River to 1,800 feet at the level of the lake. To the west of this

[Text continues on page 126]

plain is a continuously inundated, undulating plateau, standing from 1,000 to 1,200 feet above sea-level and broken by ranges of mountains whose peaks rarely exceed three thousand feet higher.

The Lower District is situated in the centre of the Protectorate. Its area of 3,400 square miles is divided topographically into three nearly equal parts, the eastern lake-shore plain on the west giving way to the escarpment of the hilly plateau in the centre, which again drops steeply on the west to another plain extending to the banks of the Sisi River. Each plain is well covered with light timber and long grass, and contains a plentiful supply of all local varieties of game. Natives have long inhabited the lake shore; on the west, migrating from Manbetsi, they crossed the Sisi as recently as 1914 and have now spread as far as the hills. The central plateau is cool and healthy. Formerly well timbered, it has since been denuded by the wasteful methods of the native inhabitants. It is free from tsetse and mosquitoes, and cattle thrive in consequence. The larger species of game are absent.

2. Ethnological Introduction.

The census of 1909, taken at the time when these notes were compiled, shows the population of the District as consisting of 17,284 Ankova,* 38,544 Betsileo, 90 Antaimoro and 1,607 Wayao, together with an odd thousand belonging to other tribes. The Ankova live principally in the west and centre, the Betsileo on the central plateau, and the Antaimoro and Wayao on the lake shore. The same census gives a total of 347,000 Betsileo and 170,000 Antaimoro and Ankova out of "300,000 natives then within" the Protectorate.

The two last named tribes, taken together are numerically the largest in Fianarantsoi, and they have probably lived in their present habitat longer than any others; but the exact duration of their residence can only be a matter for conjecture, since the history of the southern Betsileo peoples, during the last few centuries at any rate, consists of one long series of migrations and invasions. From time to time clans and tribes have been united under a strong and powerful leader, and a few decades later disintegration has set in and they have almost vanished. New names have frequently been adopted, and few tribes in south-east Africa now bear the same designation and occupy the same ground as did their ancestors four hundred years ago. Oral tradition is supplemented, but scantily by the reports of the early Portuguese explorers, who first ascended the Manbetsi River at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Their objects were commercial rather than scientific, and they have left little record of the native peoples with whom they came in contact.

It is known, however, that the Ankova and Antaimoro are off-shoots or descendants of the Antaisaka, who inhabited the country north of the Manbetsi at Ivoa and Tolo in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In his Report upon the Rivers of Cassou (Manbetsi) compiled in 1667 Father Manuel Severim states that this warlike tribe was governed by its emperor, named Cassaga, whose kingdom extended two hundred leagues up the river from the port of

* United names in Fianarantsoi generally take the plural prefix A-, as Antaisaka, Ankova, sometimes Wa-, as Wayao. The singular prefix is Mo-, as Mosaka, Myao. Further words, Abe-, Abo- and Ame- are more common, e.g. Abe-Tsiroi, Abe-Mbo, Ame-Betsileo. For the sake of convenience, when there is no danger of confusion between prefix and stem, I have omitted the hyphen.

15: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1959
FRS Ngoni FRS
Ngoniland

The present-day population of the tribe is about 85,000, of whom about 60,000 live in Northern Rhodesia and 25,000 in the Fort Manning area of Nyasaland.[1] In Northern Rhodesia the tribe is largely confined to two demarcated Native Reserves. In 1938 the density of population in these two reserves averaged 18 persons to the square mile,[2] but in some congested or very fertile areas it was 50 or more.[3] Since 1941 the density has been reduced in some of the more congested parts by controlled resettlement in areas outside the reserves.[4] The density of population of the Nyasaland section of the tribe was about 48 persons to the square mile in 1945.[5]

The region in which the Ngoni live consists of a fairly flat plateau about 3,500 feet above sea level, with massive granite outcrops rising another 1,000 feet or more. The soils of the region are principally of the types suitable only for shifting or partial cultivation, but there are also belts of more valuable soils.[6] In addition to the customary mode of agriculture, in which maize is the principal crop, the critical density of the land has been calculated to be about 20 persons to the square mile.[7] The annual rainfall at Fort Jameson varies from 27 to 48 inches, averaging about 35 inches. The region contains the morning of the Lunguwa-*Nyasa* and Lunguwa-*Zambezi* watersheds. Most of the streams that flow down into the Lunguwa dry up in July, while the *Zambezi* and *Nyasa* streams continue to flow somewhat longer.[8]

The natural vegetation of the region consists principally of *Brachystegia-Isoberlinia* woodlands, with larger trees along the lines of streams. The mean maximum temperature for the region is about

of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute. This account was prepared at Oxford, and I am very grateful to Dr. Max Gluckman for criticism of this paper in draft.

[1] In the 1951 Nyasaland census many of the people living in the two Ngoni reserves were classified as Cewa. Hence the figure of 5,431 Ngoni in Fort Manning does not represent the total population of these two reserves. Cf. *Report on the Census*, Table 9.

[2] Calculated from the figures given in the *Fire Report*, p. 362. These two reserves contain Cewa chieftainships as well as Ngoni, but the average population density of the two tribes is probably of the same order.

[3] Trapnell, *Ecological Survey*, p. 70.

[4] Fraser, *Land Resettlement*, pp. 17-9.

[5] *Report on the Census*, Table 8. The Fort Manning District contains a Cewa chieftainship as well as the two Ngoni. The figure given above is the average for the whole district.

[6] Trapnell, *Ecological Survey*, p. 70.

[7] Allan, *African Land Usage*, p. 14.

[8] Pardy, *Monsoon Geography*, pp. 1 and 2.